



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney Edward J. Tarver

Southern District of Georgia

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## **JURY CONVICTS ATTORNEY OF MORTGAGE FRAUD**

**STATESBORO, GA** - After a three-day trial, a jury in federal district court returned a guilty verdict yesterday against Emanuel County, Georgia attorney JOHN R. THOMPSON on mortgage fraud charges. The case was tried before District Court Judge B. Avant Edenfield at the U.S. Courthouse in Statesboro, Georgia.

United States Attorney Edward J. Tarver stated, "Mortgage fraud is a cancer in our society which must be cured. In this case, a lender relied upon this defendant as their closing attorney and agent and he was in a position of trust. For his criminal violation of that trust for profit, he will soon face a prison sentence."

According to the evidence presented at trial, THOMPSON, along with his coconspirators, Brian and Natasha Steptoe sold a piece of property located in Swainsboro, Georgia, in August of 2007 to what is known in real estate terms as a "straw purchaser." Thompson and the Steptoes submitted a falsified loan application and supporting documents Bank of America in order to obtain a loan for the purchaser of the property. Based on the lies contained in the loan application and other documents, Bank of America approved a mortgage loan for over \$400,000. THOMPSON and his coconspirators pocketed large sums of money for themselves as a result of their scheme. Soon after the property was sold, it went into foreclosure and remains on the market to this day.

Evidence presented at trial also established that THOMPSON and his coconspirators committed additional acts of mortgage fraud from October 2006 through May 2008, which included defrauding people out of their money while conducting real estate closings.

U.S. Attorney Tarver recognized the extensive efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in bringing this criminal activity to light. He praised particularly the efforts of Statesboro F.B.I. Special Agent Cornelius Harris, who investigated this matter.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Natalie Lee and Frederick Kramer. For additional information, please contact First Assistant United States Attorney James D. Durham at (912) 201-2547.